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Lord Chesterfield's offer to his son: "If you will do exactly as I direct until you are eighteen, I will do whatever you wish from that time onward." The second part finds striking confirmation in experience.

To most persons Judge Grant's book will prove highly interesting. For those elderly enough in age or temperament to appreciate the mellow wisdom that is consistent with not being too sure, its appeal will be strong. It offers not, indeed, detailed advice, but a rarer commodity—unpretentious counsel.

PICTURES OF THE FLOATING WORLD. By Amy Lowell. New York: The Macmillan Company.

"In the Japanese 'Lacquer Prints,'" writes Miss Lowell in her foreword, "the *hokku* pattern has been more closely followed than any corresponding Chinese form in the 'Chinoiserie'; but even here I have made no attempt to observe the syllabic rules which are an integral part of all Japanese poetry. I have endeavored only to keep the brevity and suggestion of the *hokku*, and to preserve it within its natural sphere." In this attempt, Miss Lowell has admirably succeeded. Her adaptations are as charming as are the best examples of the originals in translation. Here are two lines "to a husband":

Brighter than fireflies upon the Uji River
Are your words in the dark, Beloved.

Is it possible to get more of genuine passion, without excess into fourteen words? Says a lover:

If I could catch the green lantern of the firefly,
I could see to write you a letter.

The tender playfulness of love has hardly been better expressed by any other poet, Japanese or English. The sentiment of the following lines—a sentiment, by the way, of incalculable antiquity—has, perhaps, never before found utterance in words so simple and good:

Because the moonlight deceives,
Therefore I love it.

All these verses are satisfying and treasureable: one does not want to forget them. Why is it, one wonders, that one so promptly and instinctively does forget a great deal of what Miss Lowell writes? Consulting one's conscience, one finds that this effect is apparently not due either to ill-nature or to apathy.

Can it be that an explanation is to be found in the fact that the Japanese verses are confined more or less within a traditional form—a form that for some reason none too well understood has given satisfaction to a considerable number of people for a moderately long period of time? At any rate, it is a comforting reflection to those who like the Japanese adaptations but do not like other forms of *vers libre*

that their taste, in at least one instance, appears not to be hopelessly vitiated by addiction either to jingle or to metrical arithmetic.

The truth is that one's distaste for free verse, if one doesn't happen to like it, may go much deeper than questions of form. One would like to know why almost all verse of this kind is unsatisfying to certain minds. One would like to know why Matthew Arnold's *The Strayed Reveller*—which probably cannot be scanned—does not impress one as *vers libre*; and why one feels that some of our modern poets who take the trouble to write in the sonnet or some other restricted form might as well write polyphonic prose.

In taking Miss Lowell's latest volume as a basis for the examination of this question, one has, of course, no intention of disparaging it; one intends, on the contrary, to pay it a high compliment. If the sort of thing that Miss Lowell has done is what she and her school are aiming to do, then she has succeeded to admiration; she is unrivaled. If she is trying to conquer men's minds and hearts, as Shakespeare and Wordsworth conquered them, the verdict must be different. She has written, however, lines that any poet might envy. Some of these are in the present volume. If one passes over them, it is because of a conviction that in any intelligent criticism, the general must take precedence of the particular; the question of human values over the question of technique.

Without any intention, then, simply to find fault, with full recognition of the fact that almost every poem necessarily contains inferior lines, and of the supplementary truth that a bad line may be vastly better when it is "free" than when it is tortured into meter—one would like to call attention to the prevalence in parts of Miss Lowell's work of lines approaching commonplace preciousness and of lines expressing a rather easily attained eccentricity; and then to ask how it is that so sensitive an artist can feel that such lines are worthy of inclusion in her poems along with others which, as has been said, win instant admiration from almost any reader, irrespective of his previous condition of servitude to classic masters.

If, for example, the poem *Coq D'or* were written in prose, one would be surprised, perhaps, but not astounded, if one were presented with proofs that it had been written by an uncommonly bright schoolgirl in a class in rhetoric. Certainly, one is not especially grateful for such lines as:

Silhouetting chimneys with their queer, round pots,
My feet upon the pavement made a knock—knock—
knock.

or for such phrases as "the city with its upthrust spires," or "all tipped with gold and shining in the brisk blue air."

By way of contrast, one may direct attention to Miss Lowell's magic line descriptive of wheat in the ear: "Spear-tongue of white ceremonial fire"—a line that seems to have come from the true sub-consciousness, and not merely from transitory mood or impression, a line fit to be the soul and the inspiration of a whole poem.

Miss Lowell's poems, however, require to be judged as wholes. Obviously it is the effect of the whole that is prized; each touch, whether of genius or of childish observation (like the line about the chimney pots) is of value because it contributes to the total impression. But what determines the final effect? Nothing, it would seem, save the original impression itself. But impressions are limitless, kaleidoscopic, each unique, and one hardly more precious than another. For every different collocation of circumstances and things one may have a different emotional impression. But the uniqueness of these states of mind is not, after all, the same thing as originality.

The final criticism of Miss Lowell's poetry from this point of view would seem to be that it is the product of mood or impression, more or less transitory, demanding and obtaining attention because of its subjective uniqueness, but unsatisfying because in large part as purely personal in essence as a hypochondriac's accounts of his symptoms. Not that Miss Lowell's verses are in the least morbid! Only, unless one abstracts entirely from human values, and looks at them from the standpoint of technique alone, it is hard to discover the value of some of them. For that matter, are not some hypochondriacs artists in this same difficult art of telling just how they feel?

When all is said, no wise person wants to lay down rules for the control of the artistic impulse. But it may be suggested that in great poetry there exists a control, originating in the sub-consciousness of persons of genius, perhaps in racial memories; so that what seems vagary has its own law, instinctively recognized by the reader. Such control one feels the presence of only occasionally in the work of those who cultivate *vers libre*.